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## **The Thinking Citizen's Guide to the NPT Review Conference**

### **Answering the 10 Questions that Matter Most**

As the 190 signatories of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) gather for the five-year NPT Review Conference of the document that serves as the foundation for global nonproliferation, scholars at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs have produced a guide to address the impact of the discussions that will last throughout May.

During the NPT Review Conference, eminent Belfer Center scholars will answer the following 10 questions, concluding with an assessment and grade at the end of the conference.

**THROUGHOUT MAY, CHECK FOR UPDATES AS NEW ANSWERS ARE ADDED**

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### **THE TIPPING POINT**

**--Graham Allison**

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Weapons regime is now at a tipping point. Many scholars believe that this NPT Review conference will be another missed opportunity, ending with mutual accusations and failure to face real problems. Much of this is because many states resent American unipolar power, and the perceived arbitrary exercise of that unipolar power in Iraq. Thus, the international conference becomes an opportunity for other nations to vent their frustrations.

In the meantime, there are two big elephants in the corner, and nobody knows what to do.

In the near future, North Korea will reach its goal line (a nuclear arsenal and a nuclear weapons production line); Iran will reach its goal line (factories capable of enriching uranium and thus making bombs). The consequence of this could be an unraveling of the whole set of NPT constraints—slowly perhaps, or quite rapidly.

As my colleagues and I at the Belfer Center attempt to address the following questions about the nonproliferation treaty review, I ask you to read them with the following question in mind:

Will there be another NPT Review conference five years hence?

By asking this question, we will be able to address in five years, the factors that made the NPT regime survive, or more likely, unravel.

### **THE QUESTIONS**

- Why is the Non-Proliferation Treaty important?
- What was accomplished at the 2000 NPT Review Conference?
- What are the key points of agreement among the member states?
- What are the key points of disagreement?
- If you were a U.S. official, how would you make the best case for the Bush administration's government position?
- What about the non-attendees (India, Pakistan, and Israel)?
- What is Iran's objective and strategy for the Conference?
- How can the NPT be strengthened to deal with nuclear terrorism?
- What grade would you give the NPT Review Conference?

**QUESTION #1**  
**WHY IS THE NON-PROLIFERATION**  
**TREATY IMPORTANT?**  
**--John P. Holdren**

**THE EXPERTS**

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The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons embodies the commitment of the vast majority of the world's nations to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons into the possession of additional countries.

The "bargain" under which this commitment was achieved includes preserving and enhancing access to the benefits of civil nuclear energy for non-nuclear-weapon states in good standing under the Treaty and pursuing, over time, the elimination of nuclear weapons from the possession of those countries that now possess them.

The *goal* of the NPT is important because every additional state that possesses nuclear weapons represents additional possibilities for the use of nuclear weapons in conflict (bringing immense destruction and risk of escalation), as well as additional possibilities and temptations for the acquisition of nuclear weapons by still further states and by terrorists.

The *existence and strength* of the NPT itself are important because the goal of preventing proliferation cannot be attained by one or a few states acting alone, no matter how powerful those states might be: Attaining the goal requires the commitment and cooperation of the world community acting in concert to limit the spread, and monitor the use of, the technologies most directly relevant to acquiring nuclear weapons.

Every weakening of the NPT -- whether through a state's refusal to join, withdrawal after having been a party, suspected cheating that is not either cleared up or called out, or flouting by nuclear-weapon states of their side of the "bargain" -- weakens the belief of the world community in the attainability of nonproliferation goals and, accordingly, weakens the will of individual countries to participate energetically in the measures needed for success.

Any government concerned about the dangers from the use of nuclear weapons by either nations or terrorists, as all governments ought to be, should be doing everything in its

power to strengthen the NPT and nothing to weaken it.

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